PRACTICAL HINTS ON MODERN BANJO PLAYING

BY

CLARENCE · L · PARTEE

EDITED BY

G · G · GLEN · TURRIFF M.A.

AUTHOR OF "HOW TO PLAY THE MANDOLINE"

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How to Play
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By

G. G. Glen Turiff, M.A.

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Practical Hints on

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PREFACE.

THIS little book, which is perhaps the first of its kind, was published separately, by chapters, in the banjo, mandolin, and guitar magazine, *The Cadenza*, and, owing to its flattering reception and endorsement by the profession, is now issued in its present form to supply the demand for a work covering in as thorough a manner as possible all the essential technical details of banjo-playing.

Thus, "Practical Hints" is designed to serve a double purpose; first, to supply information which can not conveniently be given in the instruction books and methods for the banjo, and to call attention to the many little points which the teacher may, for various reasons, be obliged to omit. Secondly, to arouse the enthusiasm of the beginner or student to greater efforts to master a much-abused but most pleasing and delightfully characteristic instrument. Incidentally it has been demonstrated that the contents are not without value to those who are well advanced as artists in the profession.

So it is thought this ambitious little work may perhaps fulfil its mission; at least, such is the hope of THE AUTHOR.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

It is not an easy task to adapt an American book to a British public, and this little work appears in the light of "adoption." Nothing material has been altered; a few Americanisms removed, a word that seemed ambiguous changed, and peculiarities of American tuning either explained or omitted. The reader will bear in mind, too, that although the zither-banjo is now the favorite form here, it is very rare in America. Even the Pohlmann guitar-banjo and mandolin-banjo are more common in America than the zither-banjo. At the same time the points of difference, the vital points, where a student might be led astray, between the instructions given for the one instrument and those for the other are very few. I have to thank the author for giving me the benefit of his latest corrections, and I hope this work may prove as useful to students of the banjo in this country as it has been to Americans.

CHAPTER I.

TUNING THE BANJO.

It is the author's intention to present a series of articles on banjo-playing, and to explain essential points in a simple and comprehensive manner for the benefit of students, amateurs, and professionals of limited experience, who have been unable to find the desired information in instruction books. It is impossible to explain everything pertaining to the instrument, at length, in any single book; but it is believed that a series of sketches explaining certain matters in a more complete way than they are usually presented in the instruction books will not be considered out of place.[1]

[1] The larger part of the first chapter of the American edition is occupied with an explanation of the difference between notation and pitch, which confuses banjo students who are not already musicians. As the British banjoist plays the notes he *sees* (an octave lower) it would have been useless to trouble him with what he need never know, and accordingly the greater part of the original chapter is omitted.—Ed.

We shall therefore begin with "tuning" as the first subject to be considered.

It is taken for granted that the reader is far enough advanced to know that the strings of the banjo are supposed to be tuned to the notes C, G, B, D, and G, beginning by tuning the bass string to C, as the music is written for banjo; also to be able to tune his instrument according to the intervals given.

The banjeaurine or banjo-banjeaurine (which is an improved banjeaurine), when used in connection with the banjo proper, or in a banjo orchestra, is tuned a fourth higher than the banjo; that is, to F on the piano or guitar, and made at the fifth fret on the bass string of the banjo, to which the banjeaurine bass string is tuned so as to produce the same note when struck open. Music for the banjeaurine, on account of the tuning being different, must be written in a different key from the banjo part, but there is no difference whatever in reading or playing music written for either instrument, except that the banjeaurine has a shorter fingerboard and the frets are closer together than on the banjo, and it therefore requires practice to become used to it.

In giving the tuning of the banjeaurine, banjo,

etc., we refer of course to the notes to which the bass string is tuned. After that is tuned to the correct pitch, the other strings are tuned in the usual way, and the process is the same with both instruments. The piccolo banjo, when used in a banjo orchestra, is always tuned an octave higher than the banjo proper, while the bass banjo is tuned an octave lower, the former playing all or part of the melody, and the latter the bass notes or accompaniment.

The banjo, banjeaurine, and banjo-banjeaurine are practically the same, and music written for any of them can be played as written on any of the others when played alone. When played with other instruments, however, they should be tuned according to instructions given.

The banjeaurine or banjo-banjeaurine is indispensable in a banjo orchestra, and should always be used. It is also very effective with banjo accompaniment.

CHAPTER II.

LEFT-HAND FINGERING.

It has been asserted by some players that there is no uniform system of fingering for the banjo, as there is for the violin and other stringed instruments. They refer, of course, to fingering for the left hand, and base their conclusions on the fact that composers differ somewhat in marking the fingering of their compositions and arrangements for the banjo. For instance, some players will use the third finger at the fourth fret on the bass string to produce the note E, while a number of others will perhaps use the second finger for that note. Or one composer will indicate the fourth finger to be used in a certain place, while another would very likely indicate the third finger to be used in the same chord, etc. On account of these slight differences, the claim that there is no legitimate system for the banjo is made. This is a mistake, as I will endeavor to show.

There is a system, and if composers and teachers do not follow it more closely, it is perhaps because the exceptions made are usually

trifling, and only serve to prove the rule; or it may be that a great many do not know of its existence, and mark the fingering of their compositions according to their own ideas; at any rate, I will present a system here that may be relied on as absolutely correct in the points mentioned, because it has been proven the best, not alone by my own experience, but by that of others. In fact, it is practically the same as that used by the majority of the best performers who have published music for the banjo in recent years.

While I do not claim to have originated the system, I must claim originality in my method of explaining it, which follows. 1, 2, 3, 4, 0 are the figures used to denote the fingering, and mean respectively, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, and open string. There are as many positions on the fingerboard as there are frets, and the positions are numbered from one upwards, according to the fret at which the first finger is placed in beginning the chord or "run" of notes. That is, if a strain begins at the eighth fret with the first finger, it should be marked eighth position, etc.

Chords should be divided into two classes in marking the fingering, viz.: positions, and

barre chords. I regret to say that too few banjoists do this, most of them simply marking the position or fret, thus leaving the beginner in doubt as to what was intended.

The correct way is undoubtedly to make a decided distinction between the two kinds of chords, as it greatly facilitates reading. Thus, any chord requiring the use of the first finger on one note only is a position, while one requiring the first finger to be placed across two, three, or four strings is a barre. To illustrate: the chord made by placing the first finger at the sixth fret on the second string, and second finger at the seventh fret on the first string, should be marked 6 *, which means sixth position; and the chord made by placing the first finger across the first two strings at the sixth fret should be marked 6* B, which means sixth position barre. This at once shows the difference, and enables a beginner to make the changes more readily.

In fingering "runs" of single notes on one string that progress from a low note to a higher one, the best way usually is to use the first, second, third, and fourth fingers in succession for four notes, and then shift positions, beginning with the first finger again, and use the fingers

in the same rotation, changing positions as often as necessary to complete the "run." Sometimes, however, it will be found advisable to use the first and second fingers only in succession for two notes, and then shift to the first finger for the next note. This applies especially when the run begins on the bass string, as, for instance, when playing the chromatic scale in C major. Rapid passages can frequently be best executed, however, in positions, and should be so played when possible.

Too many open notes should be avoided. In fingering rapid passages, the fingers usually should be used from one to four when ascending, and reverse when descending, allowing for open notes. No set rules can be given, however, for fingering of this character, as each piece may be so written as to cause a change of fingering. With a little experience the performer will soon learn where to make the exceptions.

The clearest idea of correct fingering can best be obtained from the chords. In playing them the uniform system comes into use, as will be shown by the following explanation, and the performer should model his fingering from that of the chords. All chords of the same kind are fingered alike, with exceedingly few exceptions.

That is, all major tonic chords are played alike, all minor tonic chords are played alike, etc.

For example: place the first finger on the second string at the first fret, second finger on the third string at the second fret, and third finger on the first string at the second fret; pick the three strings together, and it produces the chord of A minor. Retain those fingers on the same strings and in the same relative position, and move or slide them one fret higher so the first finger begins the chord at the second fret, and you will have B♭ minor. By moving them to the next fret you will have B minor. The same position of the fingers another fret higher will give you C minor, and so on, till by moving along the fingerboard all the minor tonic chords will be obtained.

Place the first finger across the four strings at the first fret as a barre, third finger on the second string at second fret, and fourth finger on the first string at the third fret; pick the four strings together and it will produce the chord of D♭ major; retain them on the same strings and move them all one fret higher and you will have D major; move them another fret higher and you will have E♭ major; by

progressing down the fingerboard in this manner all the major tonic chords can be obtained with ease.

Or, if desired to play the three changes (tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords) in succession in all the major keys, play those chords in C major first with the usual fingering, and to transpose them to D♭ major simply place the first finger across the four strings at first fret and consider it as the nut; then by using the fingers in the same rotation and same position for each of the changes as used in C major, only beginning with the second finger instead of the first, the chords in D♭ major are obtained. By using the same fingering at each successive fret you will transpose the three chords to each of the major keys in alphabetical order. To produce the three changes in all minor keys in succession, follow the principle of fingering as used in the first key you begin with, only it will be found necessary to finger one note in certain chords where the note was open in a previous chord.

For fingering barre chords, I have found the following rule to be the best: for those requiring two fingers, use the first and third fingers; when three are required, use the first, third, and fourth; for those requiring all four fingers, of course, use

first, second, third, and fourth, but always in the order named. Any chord, major, minor, diminished, or others, may be taken at or near the first position, and by using the same fingering for each certain kind, whether barre or position, and sliding the fingers down the fingerboard one fret at a time, any certain chord may be made in all keys by any student or beginner.

A volume might be written on this subject, but I think enough has been given to convince any one that the above is not only a system, but a good one. In summing up, I would say that no one should attempt to learn the chords or to play the banjo except by note and, if possible, with the assistance of a first-class teacher. This work, however, is designed to help those who are studying the banjo, and wish to use the same in connection with their instruction books or music.

CHAPTER III.

RIGHT-HAND FINGERING.

In the present chapter I shall attempt to explain the "guitar style" of right-hand fingering or "picking" only, with a few of the principal

movements used in connection with it. There is another and entirely different method of fingering for the right hand, called "stroke-playing" (the original style of banjo-playing), by which a certain class of music can be rendered with good effect, and which is characteristic of the instrument to some extent. Of this I shall perhaps have something to say later, but will now begin with the modern method or "guitar style," which is almost universally used, and by means of which a high grade of music, formerly deemed impossible on the banjo, is performed by a number of well-known banjoists with such taste and expression as to call forth flattering comments from critics and others who a few years ago could not be induced to recognize the instrument.

The signs used to denote the right-hand fingering are as follows: × for the thumb, . for the first finger, . . for the second finger, and . . . for the third finger.

The usual method of "picking" the strings as given in instruction books is: Always pick the first string with the second finger, second string with the first finger, and the others (third, fourth, and fifth) with the thumb. This is partly correct, and will answer very

well when performing a simple piece, or certain characteristic movements, such as the "roll," in which the fingers are kept in constant motion on all the strings; but complicated selections, especially those with a number of rapid repeated notes on one string, or "runs," whether on one string or more, more frequently require the use of "alternate fingering," and the proper directions for its use should be given. I shall, therefore, give directions in a general way for use of the fingers in the different movements, according to the rules I have found by experience to be the best.

Unless otherwise indicated, chords should be played thus: Double notes and chords of three notes should be struck so as to sound all the notes simultaneously (at the same time), while those containing four and five notes should be struck separately, but very rapidly, beginning with the lowest note in the chord and ending with the highest. The latter are called arpeggios, or harp chords, and are usually indicated by a waved line placed before the chord. Chords with only three notes may also be played in this manner when indicated by the waved line placed before them, but generally they are struck simultaneously.

Sometimes it will be found that chords of four notes are required to be struck together. To do this it is necessary to use the first, second, and third fingers, and the thumb, and such an example is the only instance where the third finger should be used. A few exceptions to this may possibly occur, but are seldom necessary.

The letters D. S. placed over a chord indicate the drum slide, which is the same as an arpeggio practically, only with drum effect. It is executed by first closing the hand, and then sliding the fingers rapidly across the strings from the lowest to the highest note. The drum slide is sometimes indicated by a waved line before the chord in addition to the letters D. S. In many selections a pretty effect is introduced by drumming on the head of the banjo with the fingers. These effects are always indicated on the music.

"Alternate fingering" is, I think, the most important movement for the right hand ever introduced, except the tremolo. This fingering is simply a "double pick," or reverse movement of two fingers upon the same string, thus: Begin with the second finger, and strike the following note with the first finger, the next one with the second finger again, and so

on, alternating the fingers for each note. Sometimes the same movement is begun with the first finger instead of the second. All "runs" and quick passages should be played in this manner; in fact, it is best to get thoroughly accustomed to alternating the fingers on the first string especially, and it should be used almost continually, the only exceptions being made when playing slow music or the "roll."

The "double pick" movement just described is also used occasionally on the second and third strings. The "roll" is simply a rapid movement, usually on all the strings, and in the time of triplets, being a continuous motion, and is fingered with the right hand in the ordinary way, viz., second finger for first string, first finger for second string, and thumb for the others. In playing rapid passages or repeated notes on the fourth and third strings, and even on the second string, a "double pick" or "alternate" movement with the first finger and thumb can be used to great advantage. It is usually executed by beginning with the thumb and alternating thereafter with the first finger and thumb. Sometimes, however, it is begun with the first finger instead of the thumb. The main point is to alternate with the first finger

and thumb, or first and second fingers, as may be required, which will facilitate execution and save labor. The latter system has only recently been applied to the banjo, though I believe it has been known to guitarists, and used by some of them in the past.

It often becomes necessary to use the thumb upon the second string, and it may at times be used to pick the first string, as in the following example: When an unusual number of triplets occur in succession, especially on the first string, use the thumb and first and second fingers alternately, playing each "triplet" by picking the first note with the thumb, the next with the second finger, and the third note with the first finger; each successive "triplet" to be played in the same manner, thus producing the "triple pick," a continuous motion and sound similar to "triple-tongueing" on the cornet, or the "tremolo" produced on the guitar by using the three fingers in succession on the same string.

It is conceded by performers generally that the introduction of the guitar style of playing has done as much as any one thing to advance the standard of banjo music, and also that it is the only method by which the highest grade of music can be rendered with the proper ex-

pression. The intelligent reader will readily perceive that the instructions I have given herein for the use of the fingers of the right hand are practical, and, if properly studied and practised, will enable the student to execute twice as rapidly as before, and to do so with half the labor formerly expended.

It only remains now for those in need of the practice to learn to use these movements judiciously, by applying them whenever it is considered they can be best used. The student must always rely on himself to some extent, and have at least a little individuality, to become a good performer, and such a one will soon learn how to use these effects to advantage.

The "tremolo" is the only important movement of the right hand not mentioned herein. This is undoubtedly the best effect that can be produced on the banjo, and is worthy of a separate chapter, which follows.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TREMOLO.

THE "tremolo," as stated in the preceding chapter, is without doubt the most important move-

ment in use on the banjo, and one of the most beautiful effects that can be produced on any instrument, when properly executed. Modern players have recognized its importance and utility, and are using it to advantage in rendering a great variety of music. The performer of average experience can doubtless remember the time (only a few years ago), when the tremolo movement was seldom, if ever, used, except in playing the final variations on "Home, Sweet Home," and similar pieces, and by very few players at that. The few who could play the tremolo properly usually created a sensation at every performance. To-day it would be hard to find a professional who does not understand the tremolo movement to some extent at least; our efforts to instruct, therefore, are mainly for the benefit of amateurs and such professionals as have not had an opportunity of learning the same correctly.

There are, of course, a number of students who for lack of instruction from a competent teacher have formed incorrect ideas of how the movement should be executed, the manner of holding the hand, the number of times the finger should strike the string to the beat, etc. It is hoped the explanations given will prove useful to these

especially, making allowance for the difficulty of illustrating technique of any kind without a a personal demonstration.

There are two ways of using the tremolo, the principal method being to play the melody of a composition tremolo (usually on the first and second strings, but principally on the first), and play the accompaniment at the same time on the other strings. In this style the first finger is used to produce the tremolo, and the thumb to pick the bass notes or accompaniment. Both parts are executed with the right hand, the left hand being used to "stop" the strings as usual. The proper position of the right hand when playing tremolo with the first finger is to rest both the second and third fingers on the head of the banjo, about the middle of the "rim," holding all the fingers close together, the first finger from the second joint to the tip being inclined towards the strings, so as to strike them when desired, the upper half of the first finger resting against the second. Keep the thumb in advance of the fingers as in ordinary playing. Do not hold the thumb against the first finger when playing the tremolo; keep it free from the fingers, and, if necessary, rest it on the strings when not in use.

The tremolo is executed by moving or oscillating the finger very rapidly across the string or strings intended to be struck, striking the strings both way, forward and back. Considerable practice will be required to produce a good tremolo, and to learn to pick the accompaniment with the thumb at the same time, but the result will well repay any one for the time spent. The most difficult point to understand is, just how many times to strike the string in making the tremolo, to each count, or to each note played with the thumb.

Teachers as a rule do not explain it to a pupil correctly. I have often heard teachers instructing their pupils in tremolo-playing, but have seldom heard one explain it properly.

They usually instruct the pupil to move the finger as rapidly as possible, their principal idea being rapidity, and say nothing whatever about the tempo or number of strokes to the count; the pupil is then allowed to "work in" the thumb as best he can.

This is all wrong. The finger and thumb must be used in a uniform manner, and the tempo preserved, or a good, smooth tremolo movement can never be attained. In certain pieces that have lately come to my notice, notes

to be played tremolo are marked to be divided into demi-semi-quavers. This is not fast enough for the tremolo as a rule, although it may be used at times. I will take "Home, Sweet Home" and "Swanee River" as examples to illustrate my method of playing the tremolo. Both selections are in four-four or common time, the tremolo parts having the accompaniment written in quavers, two of which are picked to each beat, of course, while one crotchet, or its equivalent is played tremolo, in one count as usual. Most banjoists play the tremolo too fast. It sounds much better slow, and it is also easier to use the first finger to advantage.

The tremolo notes should be divided into the time of semi-demi-semi-quavers. To do this, when playing either of the pieces named above, strike the string eight times with the first finger to one quaver picked with the thumb. In the melody of "Home, Sweet Home" the first note played tremolo is a minim. Four quavers are written as an accompaniment to be played simultaneously. The minim should be struck thirty-two times to produce the tremolo, while the four quavers are picked with the thumb. Thus the melody notes are divided into semi-demi-semi-quavers. As the accompaniment is usually

written in quavers, eight strokes with the first finger must be made to one with the thumb. The student must not think that because the tremolo is to be done in semi-demi-semi-quavers it is impossibly fast, as such is not the case. Make the tempo "andante" and it becomes easy to tremolo at that rate. Such melodies as the "Blumenlied," by Lange, Rubinstein's Melody in F, Schubert's Serenade, the "Miserere" from "Il Trovatore," etc., can be rendered with most beautiful effect in the style given.

In pieces of all kinds where sustained notes occur (whether chords or otherwise), they should be played tremolo with the first finger. In such cases, bass notes may also be picked with the thumb, or omitted, as required.

Some brilliant players use a different style of tremolo, without accompaniment, in playing the same selections mentioned. This style is executed with the second or third fingers, and is quite easy to learn, as the thumb is not used at all. Pieces played in this style of tremolo are usually arranged in chords, because, being without accompaniment, the melody would not be strong enough if written in single notes.

To tremolo with the second finger, rest the thumb against the fifth string, lifting the fingers

so that the second finger can strike the strings, the second finger slanting towards the bridge, which will allow a free movement of the same. The tremolo, without accompaniment, may be played in the time of demi-semi-quavers, or semi-demi-semi-quavers, as considered best.

In closing the subject, I would say that I believe all the essential points pertaining to a correct knowledge of the tremolo movement are herein explained, and that it is the first time it has been done in print. It is, of course, not practicable to explain such matters fully in the banjo methods published, for lack of space. The manner in which it is presented here is the result of my own practical experience in teaching, and those who have practised the tremolo by this method have obtained the best results in the shortest possible time. I hope those who have not yet acquired this knowledge may be able to do so thoroughly from the foregoing instructions.

CHAPTER V.

STROKE-PLAYING AND MODERN THIMBLE-PLAYING.

SINCE the introduction of classical music upon the banjo, "stroke-playing" has fallen into disuse to a great extent, but, in my opinion, should not be altogether abandoned, because of the characteristic effects that may be obtained by its use.

At a much earlier period than the advent of players of the modern classic school, when waltzes, marches, operatic melodies, etc., were first written and arranged for the instrument, many performers had ceased to practise stroke-playing entirely, realizing that the method could not be used effectively to render high-class music, and that an era of advancement in the art of banjo-playing was at hand. A few players, however, continued to practise the original style as well as modern "thimble-playing" and the new "guitar style." This has doubtless been of great benefit to them in broadening their knowledge and in the experience gained, as a proper understanding of all the styles and their various movements

gives a performer an immense advantage over one whose knowledge is limited to one method only.

Many persons who play the banjo, as well as numerous musicians and players of other instruments, are apt to consider stroke-playing as simply "noise," owing to the hair-raising performances of the few would-be banjoists they may have heard perform with the thimble. This is only another of the popular errors in regard to the banjo and banjo music. Stroke-playing, when properly executed, is pleasing and effective, and may be used at times with the guitar style in occasional passages of the best music to advantage.

Most writers of banjo music and books describe stroke-playing and thimble-playing as one and the same thing, whereas they are two separate and distinct styles, entirely different from each other. Some may contend that they are the same, but modern thimble-playing, as practised and taught by the author and some of the best performers of that style for years, is essentially different.

Explanations of both methods follow: Stroke-playing is the original method of playing the banjo, and is executed with the right hand,

with the fingers partly closed, the first finger in advance of the others, so it can be used to strike the strings, the thumb always resting against and supporting the first finger, except when it (the thumb) is used to strike a string, or in preparing to strike one. The hand and fingers must be kept from touching the "head" and must be perfectly free, the arm resting on the "rim" as usual. The strings should be struck with the nail of the first finger and ball of the thumb, the finger and thumb being used alternately on all the strings generally, except the fifth, which is always struck with the thumb, and the first, which is nearly always struck with the first finger.

The hand should swing freely from the wrist, with an up-and-down motion, so that when the first finger is used it will strike the strings directly on the top. Do not attempt to get the finger between the strings to strike them sideways. This habit is the cause of beginners breaking so many strings. When the strings are struck on top, a better tone is obtained, and there is no danger of breaking a string unless unusual force is applied. The stroke style has always been used principally to play jigs, reels, and such tunes as the "Arkansas

Traveller," etc., but by using the "drum roll" in connection with it, the same as in thimble-playing, marches, quicksteps, and many other selections can be successfully performed. Even waltz music can be executed in this manner. The drum roll usually precedes a chord, and is written in the form of "grace notes," all the strings generally being struck separately in rapid succession, striking the full chord afterwards. It is executed by sliding the finger (or the thimble, when one is worn) over the strings from the bass or third string to the first, picking the fifth string open (which is invariably the last note of the roll) with the thumb, and striking the chord or note which follows immediately after. A waved line is placed under or over the notes to indicate the slide or roll.

In alternating with the finger and thumb, it often becomes necessary to strike two notes in succession with the thumb or first finger, sometimes more. It depends upon the piece to be played. The rules given above are the only positive ones; exceptions are few, and those will readily suggest themselves to the learner after a reasonable amount of practice.

Modern thimble-playing differs from the stroke

style essentially, because all the strings are struck with the thimble (which is worn upon the first finger) except the fifth, which is struck with the thumb; because the drum roll is used much more frequently and effectively, and also because the amount of practice necessary to enable one to strike all the notes in a rapid piece with the thimble, except those on the fifth string, permits a better touch and tone to be acquired. The position of the hand and the manner of striking the strings, etc., is the same as in stroke-playing; therefore the rules already given are sufficient.

Thimble-playing may be executed without a thimble as well as with one, but if a thimble is used, do not hammer the strings. Learn how to give the proper expression to the music you play, from the softest tone to the loudest required, but avoid extreme loud playing, and use good judgment in the degree of force applied. An expert thimble-player gets a soft, even, clean tone that can scarcely be told from "picking." For stroke-playing, a bridge of the usual width is best, but to get the best effects when using the thimble, a special bridge not more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide should be used.

It is a fact that many persons have become disgusted with the banjo in the past solely on

account of hearing some of the incompetent stroke-players referred to, whose anxious efforts to see how much "tone" they could obtain from a small banjo, often resulted in producing a horrible din, aptly compared by some writers to the sounds proceeding from a boiler factory in full blast. Happily, these exaggerated performances are seldom heard nowadays, marked improvement in all branches of banjo-playing and banjo-making being the order of the times.

I would therefore advise moderation in stroke-playing, as in everything else pertaining to playing of any one style.

In concluding this sketch, I would say that stroke- or thimble-playing, like other methods and movements, must be thoroughly practised to attain proficiency, but the results will repay those who study conscientiously.

Stroke-playing has been much abused, but the fault was doubtless of the player in most cases, and not of the method. The old saying, "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well," applies especially to stroke- or thimble-playing, because they are not effective unless the performer is expert.

The guitar style of playing is unquestionably superior for rendering the majority of pieces

suitable for the banjo, but it is well to know something of stroke-playing and those who acquire a thorough knowledge of the methods, and can execute either thimble or stroke styles as they should be done, need have no reason to feel ashamed of their accomplishment, for, although classical music is being performed more and more upon the banjo, and a higher ideal is being continually sought after by players, in technique and expression, the lighter music and characteristic banjo effects will always be acceptable, when given in a refined and dignified manner.

CHAPTER VI.

PERTINENT POINTS AND GENERAL INFORMATION.

In this chapter I shall refer to methods of "slurring," "snapping," executing the "trill," and "harmonics," with such other information as may be necessary. Slurred notes are executed by "stopping" the proper string with a finger of the left hand with sufficient force to sound the desired note. The notes to be slurred are generally a semitone or tone above the preceding note,

which must be picked or struck with a finger of the right hand before attempting the slur.

Slurring facilitates execution because less labor is involved, only half the usual number of notes being struck with the right hand, the others being slurred with the fingers of the left hand.

"Snapping" is the opposite movement of slurring. A "snap" consists also of two notes, the first of which is picked or struck with a finger of the right hand as usual, while the following note is produced by snapping the string with a finger of the left hand. This is done by pressing the string to the fingerboard and sliding the finger sideways from the string, using enough force, of course, to sound it. "Double snaps" often occur also. These consist of three notes, and are made by placing the fingers of the left hand on the required string, picking the first note as usual, and snapping the others separately, sliding one finger from the string at a time, until the double snap has been produced.

The principal difference in executing slurred notes and snapping is, that a slur is always from a low note to a higher one, while a snap is invariably from a high note to a lower one;

the first note in either case is picked or struck with the right hand. It is not recommended that these two movements should be used continually; in some selections it is best not to use them at all, but, on the other hand, a judicious combination of slurring and snapping will not only enable the young player to execute many selections with greater ease, but a splendid effect will result that could not be had if all the notes were picked or struck.

The "slide," or "glide," as it is sometimes called, is a movement which is also very effective at times, and deserves mention here. It is produced by picking a note as in slurring or snapping, and, without lifting the finger of the left hand from the string, "sliding" the same to the next note written, using sufficient pressure to sound it without picking again.[1]

The "trill," or shake, is a movement often confounded by banjoists with the "tremolo," whereas it is vastly different. The trill proper, as it is executed on other instruments, and should be done on the banjo, consists of two notes played alternately, and very rapidly,

[1] Banjoists in this country use two kinds of "slide," one where the higher note is picked, and one where it is not. These effects go under different names, but are practically the same.

usually made by striking the principal note (the one written) and the one above it in rapid alternate succession. Every trill begins and ends with the principal note, unless otherwise indicated. The close of a trill is usually a "turn," which consists of the addition of the note below to the principal.

The trill is indicated by the letters "Tr.," and, when used at all in banjo-playing, has usually been executed by a combination of slurring and snapping, and always on one string. A far better way to produce a good trill is to make the notes on different strings, generally on the first and second, and pick every note, as greater rapidity, which is most desirable, can be attained by this method.

For example, if the two notes contained in the trill were F sharp and G, on the fifth line and first space above the staff respectively, the F sharp should be made on the second string at the 7th fret, and the G on the first string at the 5th fret. The fingers should be placed firmly on both notes and retained in position until the trill is completed. The second string should then be picked each time with the thumb, and the first string with the first finger. This will permit of a speed not

possible by slurring and snapping, and will be found more effective.

Harmonics are flute-like tones produced by placing a finger of the left hand lightly across one or more strings of the banjo, usually removing the finger as soon as the strings are struck, to avoid deadening the sound. At the same time the strings should be struck with the proper fingers of the right hand near the bridge, using considerable force. Harmonics can be made at the 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th, 12th, 16th, and 19th frets, and 17th fret on the fifth string. Those made at the 4th, 9th, and 16th frets sound two octaves higher than written. The others sound one octave higher than written. That is, they sound that much higher than written if they are written as they should be. The harmonics should, when possible, be written just as the corresponding notes would be at the same frets. This, however, is not always possible, for the harmonic tones are often different from the sounds given by the regular tones at the same frets.

The lowest harmonic tones are found at the 12th fret, becoming higher when progressing either up or down the fingerboard. The reason of this is that the 12th fret is the dividing

line, or exactly half the distance, between the bridge and the nut, and the sound-waves radiate from that point in both directions. A full explanation of the apparent vagaries or "freaks" of harmonics would require a volume, and the services of a scientist besides, to explain the action of the sound-waves, so it will not be attempted here. All that is necessary for a performer to know of them is the frets at which they can be made, their pitch, the different frets at which the same ones can be made, how they are written, and how to touch the strings to produce the right tone.

All those points will be found herein, except the manner of writing them, which can be learned by reference to the Table of Harmonics contained in any tolerably complete banjo method. The harmonics made at the 4th, 9th, and 16th frets are the same, producing the same tones, while the others all produce different tones. A very delicate touch with the left hand is necessary to make a good harmonic, and for that reason I favor using the third finger for the purpose, because it is the softest, and permits of more delicacy of touch, which is very essential to the performer.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT TO PLAY AND HOW TO PRACTISE.

In this chapter on the subject of banjo-playing, I will present a few remarks on "What to Play and How to Practise." Though given here, this is by no means the least important point to be considered. On the contrary, it should be the first consideration of the pupil as soon as he may be far enough advanced to read music fairly well.

If the student has a teacher who understands his work, the teacher will certainly give him directions for conscientious and systematic practice, but if the pupil must depend upon himself, it would be well for him to realize as soon as possible that the method of practice and choice of studies and music for same should be given the closest attention and thought; and when a line of procedure has been decided upon, it should be religiously adhered to until perfection has been attained.

Of course, this will be a difficult matter to decide for those who have not the services of a first-class teacher, as well as those whose teachers are indifferent and careless; therefore the in-

structions and rules given are for the benefit especially of those who do not know what course to pursue. The rules given are those I have found the most practical after an experience of fifteen years as a teacher, and I have reason to believe those following the system as laid down will become good performers in the shortest possible time. Too many banjoists instruct their pupils without any definite system, and I am sorry to say too many attempt to learn without any definite purpose whatever. Nothing of importance can ever be accomplished in that manner. Systematic application, coupled with a resolve to thoroughly master the instrument as far as possible, will win, if the student has the talent and love for music which is essential. Otherwise little progress can be made.

It requires long experience in teaching, as well as good judgment, to know what to give a pupil to practise, and in what order the scales, chords, etc., should be taught. This fact accounts for the lack of method among young teachers, as a great many are attempting to teach, who lack both the experience and knowledge, and can teach their pupils only the few chords and pieces they have themselves recently learned, without regard to their suitability for the purpose. This

chapter is intended to instruct and benefit such teachers as may need information and encouragement, and all amateurs who wish to advance. Heretofore little information on essential points of the kind has been published, as it seems a majority of the experts are afraid to put their abilities to a practical test by putting their ideas into cold print. Others withhold their valuable (?) methods from the public for fear a rival might possibly learn a point or two. This is wrong. Much greater progress would be made by the banjo as an instrument if more well-known artists would unbend themselves, show a little more liberality, and write useful, practical, and necessary instructions for publication in the banjo journals, giving the readers the benefit of their ideas and experience. True merit is always recognized, and those who do not give their views because doubting appreciation, or from a desire to keep their knowledge to themselves, are injuring themselves more than others. In the meantime we propose to give practical hints on all matters pertaining to the banjo and its music as they occur to us.

The rules for practice I have found best are as follows:

First. Practise a certain number of hours each

day, not less than one hour, and two to three hours if you can spare the time.

Second. Arrange your hours of practice so as to begin at the same hour each day, if possible.

Third. Devote a portion of your time for practice each day to acquiring a musical tone and touch, by learning to place the fingers of the left hand accurately, and picking the strings so as to get the best possible results with the least effort.

Fourth. Study to play with expression, and use correct phrasing; above all, do not sacrifice expression to rapidity.

Fifth. Practice one thing at a time, whether it be a scale, exercise, set of chords, or piece, and learn each one perfectly before proceeding to another.

Sixth. Practise systematically from the beginning, playing each exercise or study slowly at first, gradually increasing the speed till the desired rapidity is attained.

Seventh. Memorize the fingerboard of the banjo, and the positions thoroughly; the rapid results will repay the time spent.

The routine of work from the beginning should be as follows, in the order given:

Study the rudiments of music, sharps and flats,

fingering and tuning the banjo, diagram of the fingerboard, scale in C major, exercise on open strings, exercise for both hands, value of the notes, rests, and varieties of time, chords in C major, lesson on time introducing notes of different value, characters, and abbreviations used in foregoing exercises, easy waltz or other piece in C major. (One or two other pieces or exercises may be added in each key as learned.) Scale in A minor, chords in A minor, exercises or pieces in A minor. The barre positions, etc. From this point take one key at a time, first the major and then its relative minor, learning first the scale, then simple chords, then exercises, or both, in each key till all principal keys, or all twenty-four keys, have been mastered. Each piece or exercise should introduce some new movement as well as different varieties of time for instruction. The principal finger movements used so far should include alternate fingering for the right hand with first and second fingers, and also with first finger and thumb. Suitable pieces should now be introduced in each key, gradually giving chords in positions, and more complicated movements in time and technique, till all the various styles have been thoroughly mastered, including the

tremolo and "stroke-playing." Do not attempt to learn the chords in positions at the beginning. Take the simple ones first, afterwards learning the positions gradually from exercises or pieces suitable for the purpose. After becoming well advanced, practise chords in positions in all keys; also scales in all keys in two octaves in positions.

The above is a short and concise résumé of any good method of teaching. My experience has proved it to be the most practical system. Briefly stated, my ideas on this subject are: Do not attempt to play extremely classical music exclusively; on the other hand, do not play very light music altogether. A happy medium always has been and always will be the most suitable, and is more acceptable to the public. It is well to learn the works of the masters, if possible, and play them, but a good popular waltz or march interspersed occasionally will be appreciated. Finally, I would say, practise all the movements and various styles, and add as great a variety of music to your repertoire as possible, avoiding, of course, music that has no merit, whether it be simple or difficult; and securing, as nearly as possible, a happy combination of the popular and classic. This will bring our favorite instrument, the banjo, into greater favor, and

you will have no cause for regret, as you will be enabled to please any audience, whether critical or otherwise.

CHAPTER VIII.

ACCOMPANIMENT PLAYING.

One of the important accomplishments a performer should master is the art of accompaniment-playing. This branch of the student's musical education is often entirely neglected by both teacher and pupil, being apparently considered unnecessary or superfluous. Again it seems when amateur orchestras or clubs are organized, each and every member wants to play the leading part. This is not only impossible, but absurd. There can be but one leader, and some one must play "second" banjo—why not you? Do not imagine your ability is superior to the requirements of the part. Indeed, if you prove equal to the task you may congratulate yourself, for among the best soloists to be found anywhere, regardless of the instrument upon which they perform, scarcely one in five would be capable of playing offhand a respectable accompaniment to an ordinary song as it should be done.

The reason of this is apparent: Accompaniment-playing is an art of itself, and must be thoroughly studied and practised before proficiency can be attained; thus, very few soloists are good accompanists, because their entire time and attention is usually given to their solo work, to the exclusion of everything else.

It will be possible to give only a few general hints on the subject herein, because a knowledge of harmony would be necessary before the student could understand the system of writing and arranging accompaniments, were I to attempt to explain it. *How to play an accompaniment properly* is the important point the pupil should consider.

The requirements vary according to the circumstances under which the performance is given, the character of the music or song to which the accompaniment is written, and the number and variety of instruments (if any) on which other parts are played at the same time.

First, it should be remembered that accompaniment-playing consists of something more than "thumping" the chords indiscriminately in an effort to "drown out" all the other parts. Again, if the performer is adapting or arranging his own accompaniments, he should make an

effort to introduce a little variety in the character and style, as well as the harmony, and not write all his accompaniments simply in an endless succession of "straight" chords, with never a change or rest to break the monotony. There are so many styles of accompaniments that no further effort will be made to explain how they should be written. A study of good compositions will enable the student to form a general idea of the correct method, and will enable us to devote more space to hints on how they should be executed, which is more important.

First: Do not try to play louder than the solo banjo or other instruments.

Second: Do not "twang" the strings when playing chords, as it spoils the effect. Many amateur banjo-players have a habit of lifting the strings bodily upwards when they pick a chord, allowing the strings to strike against the frets as they fall back into place, making a most irritating and disagreeable sound, that is positively nerve-shattering. This fault is generally mere force of habit, and should be corrected as soon as possible.

Third: Don't start slowly and then play faster and faster, unless the music requires it.

If you do, you will probably finish the piece

several bars ahead of your most enthusiastic competitor in the race.

Fourth: Do not play softly at all times; neither loudly throughout, unless especially indicated on the music. The same may be said in regard to playing slow or fast. These things should be indicated on the music; if they are not, the leader's judgment must be relied on as to when to play slow, fast, soft, or loud, etc.

Fifth: Don't play the chords like a machine, or with a monotonous, everlasting "plunk, plunk." Put a little spirit, life, animation, or sentiment into your playing, according to the character of the music. In a word, play accompaniments, as everything else, *with expression.*

Sixth: The entire art of accompaniment-playing may be summed up briefly as follows: It consists of the ability to read and understand the accompaniment perfectly, and to execute the same as may be required, while listening to and being conscious of the progress of the melody, so as to follow every change of tempo, degree of power, and light and shade of expression given the melody by the soloist, blending perfectly with the leading part in such a manner as to make both seem practically one. This is the ideal to be sought after, and it leaves little

or nothing to be said except that while this chapter was written for banjoists, every word of it applies as forcibly to accompaniments to be played upon the guitar as if it were written with that instrument especially in mind.

CHAPTER IX.

CARE OF THE BANJO.

EXTREMES of temperature are most injurious to musical instruments, so it is well to avoid exposing them to sudden changes. The banjo is especially affected by dampness, on account of the rapid absorption of moisture by the parchment, or, properly speaking, calf-skin "head," which is really the sounding-board; it will be readily understood, therefore, that the tone of the banjo is materially injured if the instrument is exposed to the atmosphere in damp or rainy weather. Among other rules it will be well to follow, I give directions for keeping the instrument free from dampness or effects of extreme temperature.

When not in use, keep your banjo in a flannel-lined leather or canvas case; do not rely on a

cloth bag or cover, as it is not sufficient to properly protect the instrument.

If you are compelled to carry your banjo to and from lessons, rehearsals, or elsewhere in the rain or snow, place it in a cloth cover, or wrap the rim in felt or chamois-skin, before placing it in the leather case. The double covering will be no more than is necessary to keep the instrument thoroughly dry. Steam heat has, perhaps, ruined more banjos and guitars than any other agency, although thousands of good instruments have been practically destroyed by the carelessness of their owners, in standing them near overheated stoves, often leaving them exposed to the extreme heat for hours at a time. A banjo can not, any more than a human being, survive being alternately overheated and frozen, so it is best to keep it in a room of moderate temperature and dry atmosphere, *where the degree of temperature is nearly always the same.*

Keep the banjo strung up with good strings always, and keep it tuned to the correct pitch at all times. *Do not loosen the strings when done playing,* but place the instrument in its case just as it would be if ready for immediate use.

Do not let down the bridge after using the instrument, unless you wish to carry your banjo some distance, in which case you may let down the bridge to avoid jamming it down and breaking it; otherwise, it is a mistake to remove the bridge at any time.

To prevent slipping of the pegs, wind the strings *under* the strands which hold them in place around the pegs; every turn of a peg will then draw the string tighter, and each peg will remain in position.

If a string is *false*, cut off a portion of it and try it again; after repeating this once or twice, a *true* length should result. If not, then throw the string away, and try another. *False* strings are worse than useless.

When cleaning your banjo, *never use water under any circumstances.* A single drop of water will often cause the "head" to burst, especially if dropped thereon when the head is very tight and dry, as it should be. To clean the head, use an ordinary square rubber pencil-eraser, and rub the finger-marks from the head just as you would erase pencil-marks from paper. Use a slightly oiled rag to clean the portions made of wood, as the "arm" "fingerboard," etc. To clean the metal or German-silver

portion of the rim, or other metal parts, use *Putz Pomade.* This preparation may be bought at any music store, and is used always in cleaning metal instruments, such as cornets and horns of all kinds. Place a small quantity of the pomade on a soft rag, and rub it over the entire metal part of the banjo rim; rub it off afterwards with a clean rag, and, with gentle rubbing and little exertion, a fine polish will reward your efforts.

NOTE.—The author recommends the modern 3 octave (22 frets) banjo, now manufactured by all prominent (American) makers, as the style best adapted to advanced solo playing.

APPENDIX TO SECOND EDITION.

OWING to increased interest in the banjo and banjo clubs shown by musicians both in America and Europe, and the flattering reception of the first edition of "Practical Hints," the author has decided to add to this, the second edition, his articles on "Instrumentation for Banjo Clubs and Orchestras," thus supplying information for the guidance of those interested in club

playing as well as for individual practice. As to technical points, there is nothing to add to the instructions already given. "Practical Hints" teaches the *new school* or modern method of fingering, and no changes have been made in the system since the first edition was published, nor is it probable that any material changes in this regard will be made in years, if ever. The work, therefore, may be relied on as *thoroughly modern.*

INSTRUMENTATION FOR BANJO CLUBS AND ORCHESTRAS.

I.

MUCH has already been written regarding the correct or desirable instrumentation for banjo clubs and orchestras, but inasmuch as no settled or definite form of instrumentation has been accepted as the standard, considerable inconvenience and annoyance to composers, arrangers, publishers, and members of banjo clubs has been the inevitable result, and such will doubtless be the condition of affairs until something final and conclusive is decided upon.

Certainly, it is a difficult question to decide,

and it will require time and careful consideration to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the complicated issues involved; nevertheless, in my opinion the discussion should be taken up immediately by those competent to cope with the subject, and continued without intermission until the matter is decided conclusively and finally.

The first and most important point to determine is, just what instruments shall constitute a banjo club or orchestra, and the number of parts thereto; then comes the question of how the instruments shall be divided; that is, how many solo banjos, second banjos, etc., shall be used according to whether a small or large orchestra is referred to. After this comes the question of what method of orchestration or harmonization of the various parts shall be adopted. The latter I shall refer to only briefly, because while good orchestration is of the utmost importance of itself, it is of secondary importance until it is decided just what instruments and how many of them shall form a banjo orchestra. After that is settled, the development of the orchestration and arrangement of music for such orchestras will be rapid and thorough as a natural result.

Composers and arrangers of banjo music would soon show great improvement in their writings for organizations of the kind if they had a recognized form of instrumentation to follow. Without this, each one is apt to arrange the parts of club selections to satisfy the wants of a certain club or clubs without regard to precedent or method, which only results in more confusion. I can speak from the standpoint of the publisher as well as the composer, and am sure that the present condition of uncertainty prevailing is very unsatisfactory to both.

I receive letters almost daily from leaders of banjo, mandolin, and guitar clubs and orchestras, from all parts of the country asking for music in all sorts of impossible combinations. Some of the instrumentations mentioned are ridiculous in the extreme, and it is an impenetrable mystery to me that people who are in the least musical should tolerate such combinations. The experience of every publisher has been the same in this respect. One example will suffice to illustrate the point: I once received a request to furnish music for a club consisting of 2 banjeaurines, 8 mandolins, 8 guitars, and piano.

Banjo, mandolin, and guitar orchestras, either separately or in combination, as the case may

be, should be modelled on the same lines as the usual string orchestra; in fact they must be, to be permanently successful. I prefer an orchestra composed of banjos, mandolins, and guitars, with the addition, in the case of large orchestras, of violin, flute, and violoncello parts, to any organization composed of banjos and guitars only, or mandolin and guitars only, yet an orchestra of banjos and guitars alone is as effective as any one could wish if properly organized, and not of exaggerated numbers as to membership; the same may be said of mandolin and guitar orchestras, and I will endeavour to make a few practical suggestions that may simplify these points.

In the first place, there will always be some who wish to organize a club of different instrumentation to any other, and as it would be out of the question to publish music to supply all these, why not do as has been done in the case of music for the regular orchestra by writers and publishers—viz.: establish a certain standard for small and large orchestra with an established instrumentation for each? Then there would be no uncertainty, and club or orchestra leaders would know just what instrumentations could be procured, and would

understand if extra parts were desired; they would have to arrange such parts themselves or employ some musician to do the work for them.

I am opposed to every little organization of three or four members being designated as banjo "clubs" or "orchestras"; it is incorrect, and besides, when such an organization is heralded as an "orchestra," the public naturally expects a better performance than is usually given (unless the performers are quite expert), and the reputation of the banjo as a musical instrument suffers in consequence. Such organizations should be known as banjo trios, quartettes, quintettes or sextettes, and the music written accordingly, and on the same principle as music for the ordinary string trio, quartette, etc. Such a course would certainly be a common-sense method, and would do away with much of the existing confusion. The same applies to mandolin and guitar organizations.

In my opinion no organization of less than 9 or 10 performers should be entitled to the name of "club" or "orchestra," and that should be considered a "small" orchestra, while what is known as a "large" orchestra should consist of from 14 or 15 performers to as many more

as might be found desirable or effective for special occasions or permanent organization.

Then, as soon as the instrumentation and method of orchestration for the small and large orchestra of banjos and guitars, or mandolins and guitars, and the combinations of both, were definitely decided upon, publishers would begin to issue good music for such orchestras, and the labor and worry of composers and publishers, as well as the members and leaders of banjo, mandolin, and guitar orchestras would be diminished by half.

II.

The combinations of the stringed instruments, such as banjos, mandolins, and guitars, that may be used to form trios, quartettes, orchestras, or clubs are almost endless, so it would be folly to attempt to enumerate them all, or to publish music for so many combinations, especially as many of them are neither effective nor desirable. Thus, the sensible method, as outlined in the first chapter of the Appendix, would appear to be to fix upon a certain number of instruments, say nine or ten, which should be the standard

for a "small" orchestra, and a somewhat larger number, say 15, as the standard for a "large" orchestra. Of course, additional parts could be added in cases deemed advisable, or if an especially large orchestra was desired all the parts could be "doubled" if necessary without detracting from the artistic effect.

If this were done it seems that the best and most effective instrumentations possible would soon be discovered and generally adopted, because the experience of the leaders of banjo orchestras would be along the same lines, practically. If each was directing an orchestra or club of a stipulated number of performers, practical experience would soon demonstrate to the majority which combination of instruments was most effective for a small or large club, and there would be at least a prospect of agreement and a decision to adopt a standard. At the present time, while banjo orchestras and clubs consist of any number of performers from five to seventy-five or more, according to fancy, the experiences of the leaders in directing their organizations and trying to secure an effective distribution of the various parts are so widely different that one can learn little or nothing from the experience of another, consequently

any similarity of opinion or definite results toward adopting a standard method of procedure have been impossible. With club leaders experimenting all in the same manner, and with clubs of the same numbers as I have suggested, the results would soon be different.

It is true that considerable music has been published for banjo clubs, and most of it is good and playable, but there are so few of the selections issued with the same instrumentation that if a certain piece is selected as having the instrumentation wanted, the club desiring another suitable selection arranged in the same manner is apt to find it is not to be had, and so must either have the missing parts arranged, or change the instrumentation of the club. It may be stated positively that this state of affairs is mainly the fault of the amateurs who are continually organizing clubs without a competent director and instructor (and therefore do not know just what they do want), and a large number of teachers who organize clubs from their pupils when their pupils do not possess, or will not buy, the proper instruments; by proper instruments I refer to both the *quality* and *variety* used. It is very proper for a teacher to organize a club or orchestra from

among his pupils; it keeps up their interest in their studies, and doubtless interests hundreds who would not be interested otherwise. In these points it is a very good thing for the advancement of the banjo, but a teacher should not organize a club of his pupils merely to flatter their vanity (which too many have already done), unless they have fair ability and can procure by some means from their own resources, or the teacher is able to supply them with, the right quality and variety of instruments to make a pleasing combination and a respectable appearance. Poor instruments have been the undoing of banjo clubs more than anything else, and it would be better for the teacher to supply his club with good instruments at his own expense, than allow them to appear in public, or elsewhere, handicapped with worthless instruments.

It is a very easy matter to form a trio, quartette, quintette, or even an orchestra of ten, from an average class, and it is within the power of every teacher of ordinary ability to effect an organization that will be permanent and soon be a credit to him if he will go about it systematically. The whole trouble appears to be that nearly all the clubs organized among the

amateurs and teachers referred to are merely jumbled together haphazard, with any conglomeration of instruments that may be had quickly, and without regard to ensemble.

It makes no difference, apparently, if the lot consists of two banjos for solo parts and five or six guitars for accompaniment, or five or six large banjos and one small-sized guitar. It would be much better in the latter case to dispense with the one lone guitar and let the banjos struggle along unaided; but "everything goes" with these people, and, later on, they are surprised to learn that no music is issued for two banjos and six guitars, or six banjos and one guitar, or some other impossible combination they desire!

III.

It was not my intention in writing this series of articles, to give examples of scoring for the different combinations, as I believe it would be impossible to do the subject justice in that way, except in a larger work which I have in view and which I hope to undertake at some future time.

My purpose was rather to point out the weak

places in our present system, offer suggestions for improvement, and demonstrate the advantage of proceeding in a methodical and definite manner in organizing clubs and orchestras.

Plenty of music may be had for trios, such as two banjos and guitar; banjeaurine, banjo, and guitar; two mandolins and guitar; banjo, mandolin, and guitar, etc.; also for quartettes and quintettes on the same plan, with the addition, of course, of the required number of instruments. One of the most effective banjo quartettes to which I ever listened, consisted of a banjo-banjeaurine (improved banjeaurine), piccolo banjo, large banjo (so-called), and bass banjo. The usual banjo quintette (commonly dignified by the title of "club" or "orchestra") consists of banjeaurine, 1st and 2nd large banjos, piccolo banjo, and guitar. The music published for the latter combination is, perhaps, the most effective yet put on the market for banjo organizations, especially such pieces as have extra parts for mandolins and bass banjo, which are added when the other parts are doubled to form an orchestra.

As stated before, music of a very fair grade may be had for all the combinations I have named; the fault lies not in the *grade* or quality

of the music published so much as in the *arrangement.* Of course, it is desirable to play the best class of music possible, but it is well to remember first, last, and all the time, that when a piece is to be written for more than one instrument, *practically everything depends upon the arrangement and harmonization of the different parts.* It is taken for granted that the melody to be used possesses some merit, otherwise it would be a waste of time to attempt to arrange it for any number of instruments.

I shall now endeavor to point out some of the most conspicuous faults in the published music of the day, but would first warn the young composer against undertaking to write music until he has acquired *a thorough knowledge of harmony* and also a good general idea of the *practical application of its theories* to the composition and arrangement of a melody.

I would advise all who contemplate arranging music for those instruments to take a complete course of instruction in harmony from an experienced teacher, if possible, before trying to write any music for publication.

Let us take music written for 2 banjos and guitar as the first example ; the first banjo part is the solo or melody, while the second banjo and

guitar parts are both usually written as plain accompaniments on "straight" chords, making the accompaniment too heavy for the melody. A vast improvement in this arrangement, and probably the best that could be made, would be to write an independent part or counter melody for the second banjo instead of making it a simple accompaniment; another method would be to write the second banjo part as an alto part to the soprano of the melody; still another means of gaining some improvement in effect would be to divide the melody between the banjos, the second banjo taking up the melody at times, and the first banjo taking the accompaniment in a different position or a different style from before. The guitar parts in this and all other combinations could also be greatly improved by introducing broken chords, bass notes, runs, arpeggios, etc., occasionally, to break the monotony of the chords. The same faults appear in the arrangements for banjeaurine, banjo, and guitar, also for madolin, banjo, and guitar, and may be remedied by the methods I have given.

When writing for three instruments *write three separate and distinct parts* if you want a good effect, and it is just at this point that the knowledge of Harmony is necessary, especially

the ability to write in two, three, or four part Harmony, for without this it would be impossible to write an alto, tenor, or bass part to a melody correctly, or even an independent part for the second banjo, as I have suggested.

The trios published for two mandolins and guitar are very fair as a rule; the most glaring fault in such arrangements is that in many cases *the second mandolin part is written higher than the first!* This is a lamentable error, and *should be avoided by all means* if possible. One of the rules of Harmony and composition to which there is no exception is, the alto part must never go above the soprano or melody; as practically all second mandolin parts are supposed to be alto parts, the pertinence of this rule will be apparent.[1] Of course, in all arrangements for two, three, or more mandolins and guitars, there is the fault of a wide "gap" between the mandolins and guitars, but this can be avoided only by introducing another instrument, such as the mandola, which must be tuned a fifth lower than the mandolins in order to improve the effect. When tuned thus the mandola part fills the gap between the mandolins and guitars, but it would not do

[1] Nevertheless, some good effects are obtained by this inversion of position.—ED.

so if tuned an octave lower than the mandolin, as is customary at present.

Other instruments, such as the 'cello, or one of similar tuning, may be added with good effect to large orchestras of banjos or mandolins, or both combined; violin and flute parts are also a very effective addition to large clubs.

The faults I have enumerated are prominent in all combinations, but are especially noticeable in the club arrangements now in use. Lack of variety in the different parts and an uneven balance, owing to the gap between the mandolins and guitars when those instruments are used, are the principal faults to overcome. The first may be remedied by intelligent writing of the parts according to the principles of Harmony and composition, but the latter can be remedied only by the addition of other instruments of an intermediate pitch. It is not my purpose to give a list of instrumentations for banjo clubs that might be adopted; my object in writing this treatise is merely to distribute such information as might prove beneficial, and, by provoking discussion of the subject, induce composers to decide on standard instrumentations for banjo orchestras that would be more satisfactory than those mostly used at present, especially the com-

bination of banjeaurine, first and second large banjos, piccolo banjo, and guitar. If anything is accomplished in this direction it will be of lasting benefit to the stringed instruments and their players, and all who work to that end should feel amply repaid for their efforts.

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